

'First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out –
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the communists
and I did not speak out –
because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the trade
unionists and I did not speak out –
because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me –
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.'

Pastor Niemoeller *(victim of the Nazis)*

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Useful links and places:

-Catholic Worker Websites:
www.catholicworker.com
www.catholicworker.org
www.lacatholicworker.org
www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker
www.catholicworker.com/bookstore/index.html
www.cjd.org

-Radical/Progressive Christianity
www.jesusradicals.org
www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com
www.geezmagazine.org
www.catholicanarchy.org
www.anglocatholicsocialism.org
www.tierra-nueva.org
www.romancatholicwomenpriests.com
www.desertwisdom.org/dttw



-Anti-War
www.stopwar.ca
www.ivaw.net
www.serve.com/nukeresister
www.resisters.ca
www.wri-irg.org
www.plowsharesactions.org
www.cpt.org

-Activism
www.foodnotbombs.net
www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook
www.iww.org
www.deathpenalty.org
www.freegan.info/?page=home
www.justicia4migrantworkers.org
www.drivemovement.org
www.streamsofjustice.org

-Other Good Websites:
www.vancouverdiy.com
www.pcac.net/indexn.html *(Palestinian Child Arts Centre)*
www.southcentralfarmers.com
www.commongroundrelief.org
www.teachingforpeace,org
www.jonahhouse.org
www.primitivism.com

Find God in the Darkness

Based on a sermon given at West Hills Friends, Portland Oregon
By Joy Ellison

Lately, I've realized that very few people actually understand what people like me are doing working in Palestine. Certainly there are many people who've never heard of organizations like Christian Peacemaker Teams or the International Solidarity Movement, but that's not what worries me. It's the way our friends and supporters and often the way we ourselves describe our work that's begun to disturb me. Often people like me who work supporting Palestinian non-violent resistance are described as "active peacemakers" or "people standing in the way of violence." They say that we're "standing in solidarity with the oppressed" or "shining God's light in the darkness" or, my personal favourite, "trying to save the world."

I suppose all of that is true, to some degree, and I find it deeply flattering. But I think these descriptions are also very convenient. They make the work we do seem difficult and that in turn allows people to react to it in one of two ways: first, these descriptions make it very easy for the listener to say, "why, I could never do something like that." Secondly, and this is what concerns me more, these descriptions make our work seem very important and even gallant. They create a dangerous potential for nobility and self-righteousness. They also shield us from the questions that the Israeli military occupation of Palestine poses and make it easier for us to avoid questioning ourselves. They also prevent us from fully confronting the despair always present in situations of oppression.

So, let me tell you what we, the people who serve in organizations like Christian Peacemaker Teams, really do. I think that you'll find that the reality is less gallant and more humble than we might wish for.

We let Palestinians feed us. We accept gifts from people who cannot afford to give them. We meet people and try not to mispronounce their names. We explain to many people that we don't know President Bush personally, but we'll tell everyone we do know their story. Most importantly of all, we act in a way that allows people to preserve their dignity.

We participate in the daily realities of the oppressed – in this case the Palestinians – as much as outsiders of varying degrees of privilege ever can. Sometimes we stand in line at checkpoints for hours. We try to convince soldiers to let people go home or to the grocery store. We sweat. We grumble (at least I do). We look for that of God in other people.

We spend money in places that no one else goes. We smile at people whose lives are hellish. We play soccer with children. We are a presence. We care. And it's hard to know if we're doing a lot of good, but we find it difficult to stop or to do anything else.

Over this summer, I set aside time to study Arabic so that my work in Palestine might be more effective and more respectful. On a typical day, I might have found myself travelling to Jerusalem on an errand. I'd probably be in a bit of a hurry, but I'd visit my friend Mahjadee who owns a dying tourist shop on Manger Street. Talking would turn to drinking coffee, which would turn into an Arabic lesson and buying a present for my mom. An hour later, I might finally leave Bethlehem for Jerusalem. I'd try my best to act like a human to the Israeli soldiers who check my ID at the checkpoint, though I'm not sure how one does that when a glass window and a wall of silence separates us. I'd run my errands in Jerusalem and then I might buy prayer beads for my friend Marwan, who always smiled sadly whenever I told him I was going to Jerusalem. I'd find a shop and choose a piece of Jerusalem to bring back to Marwan, who hasn't been able to travel to his holy city, only 5 miles from his home in Bethlehem, for 12 years. I'd let the shop owner rip me off, to the degree I could afford. Then I'd get back on the bus, show my ID again at the checkpoint and go home to my host family. What did I accomplish? I'm still not sure.

Or maybe, on a day I was feeling strong and resilient, I might visit my friend who has the misfortune of working next to a holy site for Christians, Muslims, and Jews: Rachel's Tomb. Because of its proximity to the tomb of Abraham's wife, Rachel, the Israeli army has surrounded his shop with the 25ft high cement Annexation Wall. The Wall snakes inside Bethlehem to swallow up the tiny shop and all of his business with it. His shop is dying now, and when I would come to visit he would tell me his problems and cry because the situation had stripped him of everything and is now chipping away at his last possession: his dignity. I would drink tea, say hello, and try to make him let me pay my bill.

All I could do was let him know that I knew he was there and give him a few more shekels to scrape together to feed his family.

Sometimes, usually even, our work seems more direct. Christian Peacemaker Teams volunteers to accompany children on their way to school. CPTers stand in the way when settlers throw rocks at them. We try to find ways to support the Palestinian-led non-violent resistance movement. We sometimes serve as a bridge between Israeli and Palestinian activists and we attend demonstrations against the Israeli Annexation Wall. On what might be called an "exciting" day (and those are the days one learns to fear) international activists might grab or pile on top of Palestinian activists to un-arrest them. When we are successful, we know we've helped to make sure a mother or father or beloved child will go home safely, instead of off to spend years in an Israeli jail. Like all activists, we have many projects: we create documentaries, reports, and activist resources. We write letters, paint signs, and work very hard. Always, we are writing about what we see. We're always trying to say whatever we need to say to help our friends understand what is happening, to make them care, and incite them to do something.



In my experience, these simple actions are what comprise the reality of what we are doing when we work in solidarity with Palestinians. I think, though, that in all of this, while we may want desperately to believe we are changing the world--and I still have faith that we are--we are also looking for God in the dark places. We may like to think of ourselves as the peacemakers Jesus called blessed, but we have also become blessed because we are poor in spirit and blessed because we mourn.

When I returned to Palestine this summer, my prayer was that I would see God in the soldiers and Israeli officials I came in contact with. As I stepped off the plane and tried to steady my [redacted] nerves for the trip through Israeli security, my prayers were immediately answered. The girl behind the glass was about my age and pretty. It was easy to see God in her. I didn't expect to continue to see God in the eyes of Israeli soldiers, but I did. And the truth is, I still don't know what to do with the piece of God I saw so clearly in those young soldiers. Would Jesus carry a gun?

I still don't think so.

But I saw him doing just that.

What do we do with experiences like this? It's hard to see clearly in the dark. But sometimes it is in the dark that I am finally able to see God. <

RENOUNCE THE SIN OF WAR AND EMBRACE THE GOSPEL OF NONVIOLENCE

By Art Laffin

As the U.S. occupation of Iraq enters its fifth year, the vast majority of the Iraqi people, and a majority of the American people, are demanding an end to the occupation. Still, the Bush Administration remains committed to continuing this occupation. Moreover, the administration is contriving a new threat that mirror's the lies that were propagated for the Iraq invasion--Iran's nonexistent nuclear threat--to justify not only remaining in Iraq, but also attacking Iran! The Administration is also asserting unsubstantiated claims that the Iranian government is supplying arms to Iraqi insurgents. Although many in Congress oppose the Administration's plans for continued occupation, Congress is reluctant to cut off funding for the war because it does not want to be seen as "not supporting the troops." And many in Congress have been silent about a U.S. attack on Iran. It appears now that the administration may be able to pass its proposed $630 billion military budget, or a slightly scaled down budget, which includes supplemental aid for Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the casualties continue to mount for Iraqis and U.S. soldiers, as the violence in Iraq continues to spiral out of control, and as a possible new attack of Iran looms on the horizon, "What would Jesus do?", is the question Christians must ask. The Gospel mandate is clear: love one another, love your enemies, put away the sword, forgive, blessed are the peacemakers.

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Catholic Church response to the occupation has been ambiguous and equivocating. In a December 24, 2004 Nationan Catholic Reporter article I commended the bishops and the Vatican for speaking out against the US invasion of Iraq. However, the bishops have been virtually silent about the war until their statement issued at the November 2006 bishops conference. When I read this statement about Iraq I was deeply saddened. While I commend the bishops for acknowledging the human and economic cost that the war has caused, there was no real acknowledgment of the unspeakable crimes the U.S. government and military has committed in Iraq. The bishops did not address the fact that, according to The Lancet, a leading British medical journal, an estimated 654,000 Iraqis have died as a direct result of the invasion. It did not address the fact that U.S., as a result of 16 years of U.S. bombings, U.S./UN-led economic sanctions, and now invasion, has destroyed Iraq and caused a total of an estimated 2 million deaths. Moreover, the bishops did not call on the U.S. to repent for these crimes. Rather, the USCCB declared in their statement: "Our nation's military forces should remain in Iraq only as long as their presence contributes to a responsible transition."

I ask: How can the U.S., which has committed genocidal war crimes in Iraq, ever bring about a responsible transition?

The Catholic Church is complicit in the death and suffering of Iraqis and U.S. soldiers because of its failure to unequivocally condemn this war as illegal and immoral. I agree with Bishop John Michael Botean, who said in a pastoral letter on March 7, 2003, "that any direct participation of this war against the people of Iraq is objectively grave evil, a matter of mortal sin." Before the invasion, the USCCB should have said that no Catholic soldier should participate in this war, pay taxes to prosecute the war, or make weapons to be used in the war. Just think of how many lives could have been saved if the Church took this prophetic stand! How many deaths will it take till we know that too many people have died? I mourn all the war-dead, Iraqi and U.S, as well as the countless people who have been maimed and injured for life.

Moreover, the bishops did not once in their statement mention the oil politics that was really the driving force for the invasion. It did not mention the war profiteering of the arms industries. It did not mention the profiteering of companies like Bechtel and Halliburton.

During this Holy Season of Lent, we recall Jesus' proclamation: "The reign of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel!" Thus Lent is a special time for personal and societal conversion, a time to turn away from the idolatry, violence and evil in our hearts and in our world. It is a time to renew our commitment to do what God requires: to embrace the way of nonviolence, justice and peace.

All life is sacred. It is time to repent for our complicity for the sin of war. Not one more person should suffer or die from U.S. war making and military occupation.

It is painfully clear that continuing the U.S. occupation will only result in more death and suffering for the Iraqi people and U.S. soldiers and their families. It is time for all Christians, including church leaders, to speak with a clear, bold and prophetic voice. It is time to call for an immediate withdrawal of all U.S. soldiers, intelligence personnel and private contractors from Iraq and Afghanistan. It is time to cut off all war funding and close all U.S. military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is time to investigate and demand the dissolution of Blackwater, the secret mercenary force hired by the U.S. military in Iraq. It is time for Catholics and for all people of faith and goodwill to unequivocally resist the administration's "long-war" plan and policies of pre-emptive/preventive war making. It is time for the U.S. to renounce its aspirations of empire and global domination and instead seek to build the beloved community.



It is time to call on all soldiers, our brothers and sisters, to refuse orders to fight and kill and to actively support all military refusers and conscientious objectors. (Hundreds have signed "Refuse to Fight-Refuse to Kill" statement. See www.jonahhouse.org)

It is time to make reparations to Iraq and to call for a "surge" in reconstruction funds for Iraq and Afghanistan, with a special proviso that no U.S. contractor profit from such reconstruction.

It is time to demand an end to U.S. threats to attack Iran and instead hold peace talks with Iran. It is time to dismantle the entire U.S. nuclear stockpile as an example to the world that we are serious about nuclear proliferation and abolishing all weapons of mass destruction from the face of the earth.

It is also time to condemn, as morally reprehensible, the sin of torture, and to call for the repeal of the Military Commissions Act, and the closing of the Guantanamo U.S. military prison and all other secret U.S. torture and detention centres.

It is time to work for a just peace in the Middle East and ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

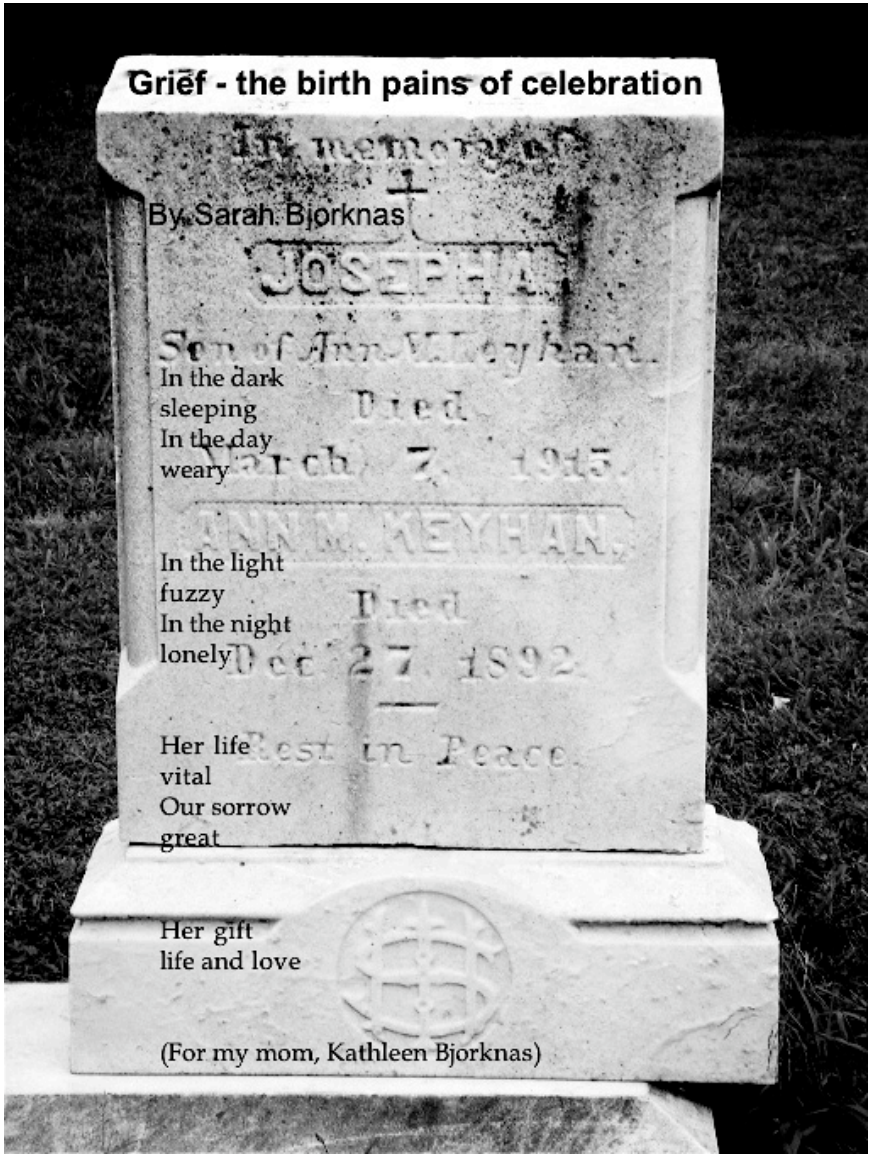


It is time to acknowledge complicity in the U.S. oil addiction, embrace an ethic of responsible stewardship, and simplify our life-style.

It is time for all Catholics and other Christians to take the Pax Christi "Vow of Nonviolence."

Encouraging signs of hope abound. More soldiers are protesting the war. Many people are engaging in nonviolent civil resistance actions across the U.S., including at congressional offices as part of the Voices for Creative Nonviolence inspired campaign called "The Occupation Project." And on March 16, thousands of Christians from across the U.S. came to Washington to pray and act for peace at the White House to call for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq and 222 were arrested at the White House. On March 17, thousands more protested at the Pentagon. And on March 20, 44 people were arrested on Wall Street.

The reign of God is at hand. Let us renounce and resist the sin of war and become God's nonviolent peacemakers! <



Commitment

By Melissa Sillitoe

My friend Cathy has spent 20 years managing to stay sober for a few days or a few months, and then she relapses. Twice, I've shown up when she's called me drunk out of her mind and poured out bottles and gotten her dressed and home. She's remorseful, goes to anonymous meetings, detoxes, group counseling, supportive living houses, all of these. And then one day she gets scared and starts drinking and stops everything else—her job, her family.

My friend, Raymond, went to sober dances with me and told droll, hilarious stories about heroin addiction over endless cups of tea in his upstairs apartment. Then he discovered harm reduction—he would still use heroin, but he would only use clean needles, and he would limit how much he used and when he used it. One day, Ray's mother and best friend found him a few hours dead of cardiac failure.

I have empathy for both Cathy and Raymond. I spent seven, maybe eight years addicted to alcohol, drinking every day after work and all day every weekend day. I knew for a very long time that I was addicted and didn't stop drinking. I had many theories about my drinking and read about alcoholism and self-help over many shots of vodka. All of the evidence that this didn't work and my good intentions did not keep me from drinking. And then one day, after years of wandering in the darkness, God gave me a moment of clarity. I decided not to drink any more. I prayed, asked God to remove my obsession with alcohol, and I asked other people for help, too. During my first few days, I felt a presence that I hadn't felt since childhood return to me, and I called that presence God. It helped. I've spent the last seven years learning how to be sober and deal with reality—but I made the decision to stop drinking *first.*

Seven years later, I rarely think about drinking, and I think even less about being a recovering alcoholic. I keep beer and wine in my apartment so I can offer these to my guests. Since I am absolutely convinced that I can't drink, having beer and wine around isn't a problem. Of course, it took years for me to really arrive at this conversion and moment of clarity that has kept me sober for seven years. I damaged myself and other people as I figured this out.

Finally, though, God helped me back into the light, and I came to believe, as a result of this miracle, in God.

So I don't think about drinking. And I don't think about *not* drinking, honestly. My friend attends several support group meetings each week, but *she drinks.* I don't mean to sound critical of anonymous fellowships—one of them saved my life and kept me sober when I still believed that I needed vodka in order to talk to people or wash dishes. No, what I see as the key difference between us is that *I don't drink,* period. I don't think about drinking, and when I'm in a situation where alcohol is available to me—like poetry readings at bars and parties and happy hours with friends and concerts and wine and cheese art gallery strolls—*I don't drink.*

This is the only time in my entire life that I have made a commitment and kept it, perfectly, unflinchingly, unquestioningly. As a result, I don't spend any mental energy wondering what to do with myself. At some point, I stopped theorizing about what life would be like sober and just stopped the behavior. I started living the life I wanted to live before I changed my beliefs about what that life might be like and what that "sacrifice" (if you can call giving up blackouts and spiritual nihilism a sacrifice) might entail. As a result, I have found more happiness than I ever imagined possible.

Last night, I stopped by my parish to see if I could help serve a dinner to the homeless people who live in my neighborhood. I've wanted to find some way to demonstrate my faith. I am new to Catholicism and am most comfortable with "doing" things—I made and handed out sandwiches at the cathedral in my hometown before I moved here. I am not so much a Sunday school teacher. The volunteer coordinator said I could be a "floater" since there was a group of junior high school students and Catholic university students who were assigned all of the actual positions. I told her that since she didn't actually have anything for me to do, I wouldn't stay. Why stand around when she didn't need me? However, as I walked away, I wondered if demonstrating my faith today always had to be on my own terms. I could have stayed and stood around and felt bored and awkward but been available to help my parish if needed. Well, why not?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who stayed in Nazi-occupied Germany to act as a shepherd and voice of conscience and was executed for his part in an assassination attempt against Hitler, writes in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship* that the greatest threat to Christianity is the gift of "cheap grace." Cheap grace allows us to believe that God's love for us does not demand any drastic commitment on our part to God. We decide that God's gift of Grace demands that we stop proving ourselves through "works"—which are, after all, inconvenient. No, says Bonhoeffer: Martin Luther's invitation to follow God came at a great price. He gave up his credibility, his safe life as a priest to live, instead, in the world, and to share his revelation about Grace—regardless of the personal cost to him. Once the call is made, once you are at that road in Damascus, he writes, you don't turn back.

I believe that God wants us to love our neighbors and stop making up legalistic rules that prevent us from doing so. Bonhoeffer, however, worries about self-help-styled spiritualities that say, believe, but don't worry. God wants you to be happy. Or even the evangelical legalistic belief systems that basically promise Christ died for my sins, so we can "sin." (Whatever that means.) Bonhoeffer calls this "cheap grace" a cop-out. He points out sternly that, "The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from the grace. But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves." (p. 51.)

Why do I continue to read this book that interprets Christ's words far more literally than I do? First, the author died for his beliefs. If someone is going to tell me about being willing to walk the walk, well, he qualifies. Another reason is because it is black and white and absolute, and I prefer the world to be black and white. (However, I see this as a character trait that hinders my ability to love my neighbors and that doesn't need to be reinforced in the guise of spirituality, thanks.)

Mainly, though, I listen to him because what he says is *consistent, resonates, and is inconvenient,* just like my Christianity and socially debilitating belief in God following a conversion experience in 2002, leading me to attend RCIA and be baptized as a Catholic.

I have spent the last couple of years learning what this means. *But I first made the decision to be Catholic, without second-guessing the theology. I felt the call, and I made the decision. Or did I? What does it mean to me to be Catholic?* Becoming Catholic was like making a decision to be sober and then finding out what this means. I realized, for reasons that defy explanation, that I was called to be Catholic. And once I made that decision, I did it. I showed up every week for RCIA, I attended mass every week even though I could not participate in the Eucharist—even though my ideal Catholic church would offer *everyone* the Eucharist, I obeyed this belief that I don't understand or agree with—and I was ultimately baptized. I *am* Catholic. Now what does that mean?

Have I become Catholic? I attend mass and help people (when it's convenient) and am usually kind. I pray, but I've never changed any behavior in my life to align myself to my church. I have stayed firmly in control of my own life. At times, I've left a boyfriend's bed on Sunday morning to attend mass. Do I believe that God cares about sex outside of marriage? Actually, no, I don't, and this makes it easier to be liberal, live in the world, and to not "judge" my friends. But that isn't the point; the point isn't the *why*, the point is that I am not willing to change unless it's on my terms. When I stopped drinking, I told someone that I would still smoke pot since I could "take it or leave it." And the friend said, in that case, why not leave it? And I have, for the past seven years. What if I decided to live aligned with the Catholic Church whether I believe it or not? Just for the hell of it, maybe?

What does obedience mean to me? What does it mean to make a commitment as a Catholic? Bonhoeffer says that the action must come *before* the belief. He writes that we argue that we "won't obey because we don't believe." No, he says, "we don't believe because *we don't obey."* He urges me to surrender anything that stands between me and my commitment to loving God and my neighbors unreservedly. When I live my life as a Christian, I will be rewarded by belief. He urges me to stop theorizing about God and how to be Catholic and instead show up as one. (Another important sober lesson I've learned—intentions are not actions.) He adds:

"Of course, I say, I want to do his will, but he does not tell me how to set about it. The commandment does not give me any clear directions, and does nothing to solve my problems…. Every moment and every situation challenges us to action and to obedience.

We have literally no time to sit down and ask ourselves whether so-and-so is our neighbor or not. We must get into action and obey—we must behave like a neighbor to him. But perhaps this shocks you. Perhaps you still think you ought to think out beforehand and know what you ought to do. To that there is only one answer. You can only know and think about it by actually doing it. You can only learn what obedience is by obeying. It is no use asking question; for it is only through obedience that you come to learn the truth." (p. 78)

Demonstrating my faith as a Catholic means living by God's precepts in my daily life. When I was addicted to alcohol, I knew the type of life that I wanted to live, but I was literally unable to live it. I could not trust myself to live up to promises that I made; I knew that alcohol would always come first, even taking priority over people I loved. Every day that I learned to be sober, I learned to live a good life.

As a Catholic, every day is a new opportunity for me to serve God and other people, period. I don't get to theorize or choose when it's convenient to be Catholic. Instead of looking for clearly boundaried ways to "serve," I get to be kind to the annoying people who are already in my daily life—guess what, *they're,* my neighbors, all of them! Daily actions that have hateful, harmful, destructive effects are inconsistent with my daily commitment to God. I am Catholic each day as I decide how I eat, how to spend my money, whether I walk or drive. In short, I am Catholic *no matter what.* If I ask God to help me live this intention, I will get closer to living the meaningful, happy, authentic life that I want to live. <



This is what we're paying for

By Chris Rooney

The Olympics; whether we want them or not, they are approaching, their proponents have the money, the hired guns, the police, and the PR, but can they be stopped? What are our options? In talking to people I know, the view seems pretty split; some people believe that the games have become an inevitability; that we ought now to focus on damage control or resign ourselves to their presence. Still others say that we can yet stop them if we act militantly and immediately.

I hope what I write here might encourage you to give this issue serious thought and that you might be inspired to come to your own conclusions and take your own actions.

It shouldn't by now be difficult to see the effect that these Olympics are having on this city. The poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting a RAV line. Local businesses are going under as rents and construction costs increase and bigger, more anonymous, homogenized chain stores are moving in to take their place. Real-estate is becoming so expensive that only the very rich can afford to buy anyplace worth living in while everything else is being sold to the developers, land sharks who build condos for people who plan on speculating them instead of living in them.

This past year the city of Vancouver faced not only one of the worst winters on record but it also experienced one of the biggest failures of our collective compassion in the face of mounting homelessness and lack of alternatives for people who all of a sudden had to learn how to live outside in punishing snow and unusually heavy rain storms.

As the city goes over budget on development for this seventeen-day party, the poor and the underprivileged get pushed farther onto the margins. How much did the Olympic Clock cost to build? How much will it cost to employ a security firm to watch it twenty-four hours a day, for the next three years, so that angry people don't deface it in protest? How much am I paying in taxes for the demolition of Eagleridge Bluffs?

How many people like Harriett Nahanee have to die or be silenced as the highways expand? And since we have it to spend, why isn't all this money being directed to the people who need it the most?



I would like to tell you about another Olympic city if I may.

I was a child in Calgary in 1988 when the winter Olympics were hosted there, I can remember the pomp and the glory of the commencement ceremony and the other frills that came with the games. I remember much of it from television because the cost of attending the events was beyond what the average Calgarian could afford. I also remember something else; I can remember the buildings, which remain as landmarks and expensive eyesores to this day. I can remember, years later, going ice-skating once on the rink built for the games. I can recall feeling dwarfed by the vastness, of being almost alone in the emptiness of that place.

I can remember visiting the Calgary Olympic Park, a ski slope on the edge of the city, which was remodeled into the area where the ski jumping, luge and bobsledding was held. Those buildings are still there, jutting from the most mediocre ski hill in Alberta. From the '88 Olympics until today I can't recall another ski jumping or bobsled competition being held there. I remember it only as a museum, a monument to an event that blew through town and left an expensive legacy of empty buildings.

While it's true that Calgary has a wealthy economy it does so despite the Olympics; an event, which is always billed on the ticket of economic boom but is seemingly always remembered as a whimper, or a groan.

This is what Vancouver is heading towards. We are heading towards a city with more sports arenas then we can justify, we are heading towards a brand new downtown east side; one that has been economically cleansed of the community who live there now, a community--which will not be cared for--only diffused throughout the GVRD and brushed into new dark corners to be forgotten about again. We are moving towards a city where ever more the needs of the least are ignored for the profit margins of the most comfortable and we are heading towards a debt that will be inherited by our grandchildren.

Ask any homeless person in Vancouver whether they would prefer a new commuter train to the airport or a house to live in free of charge, like the ones we are giving to all the visiting athletes? Ask the single parent in Strathcona whether she would like a new skating rink in Richmond or more money to fund her children's school? We can't have both.

Either we as people start to think critically and act decisively to care for and about the people we call our neighbours or we are going to inherit a legacy of neglect, a legacy destined to grow over time. Our children will inherit a city devoid of the essential things a city should have, and they will grow up surrounded by the social and economic casualties of this spending binge. They will inherit a city full of old ski-jumps and massive, empty skating arenas. They will not inherit pristine wildspaces like Eagleridge, our children will inherit a city of ghosts and we're all to blame for this. I'm to blame because when the referendum happened I didn't care enough to turn my bitching into a vote. We are all to blame; many because we chose to ignore the consequences of our actions, others because we've been conditioned not to give a shit, still more because we think that this is what we really want, and others because they will never have a chance.

Yet I believe there is still hope. Even if the Olympics can't get thrown out of the city, even if it's too late to stop the grinding of this well oiled and bloody machinery we can turn our backs to it and refuse to participate or co-operate. We can refuse to follow or enforce un-just and anti-human laws like project "civil city" or the "safe streets" act and we can stand in solidarity with those who are working and agitating for their end. None of us needs permission from a cop, a bureaucrat or government official to start to take care of our neighbours and to act lovingly towards one another.

In fact if they try and stop us so much the better let them flood their jails with good Samaritans, people who are guilty only of the crime of helping one another. There are lots of ways that we can bring a message of love and non-violence to this city. We can take to the streets and march, we can open our homes to the needy, give out clothing, or food, or rain gear, we can create new alternatives to this domination system, we can work with groups both secular and religious who are already doing these things, and we can demand that our elected representatives repeal laws which de-humanize people and rob from the poor.

If we are serious about loving one another, if we are serious about bringing positive change to this city then the obligation rests with us to get active in any way possible.



Who knows? Perhaps the Olympics can still be thrown out of this city and the wealth re-distributed to the poor. God grant that this could happen non-violently, that we could collectively awake to the "civil city" nightmare we are building at our own expense. I doubt that anything less than a social revolution would create that specific change, but woe to us all if our lack of compassion and our collective lack of creativity brings violence to the streets. Woe to us all who can not envision a better more caring city than the one we are allowing to be built in our names, and woe to us all if we don't have the courage and the imagination to find peaceful and practical solutions to the problems that plague us now, because they will be with us long after these games are through.

If we do nothing to care even for the least amongst us and treat each other as equals, as the neighbours we are, then we might as well be paying for our own graves. <

Shift Change

Shift change. I just watched the changing of the guard from the small window I have in the back of my cell. Watching the swine get into their cars and drive away, I can't help but wonder what's inside their heads after a 12-hour day of supervising a bunch of dying men. Do they try to hide the reality of the situation from themselves? How can they live with themselves? To all the world, we are monsters, but the swine get to witness things that no other can. Does it affect them at all? I imagine the indoctrination they're all put through wears off at some point. How can it not?

And yet...

I doubt that I'd ever be able to handle their job. Interacting with people knowing they're gonna be murdered. I know how the swine do it, for the most part. They tell themselves that it's just a job. That's mostly where a lot of their abuse stems from. If they can treat us like we're monsters they don't have to tell themselves that we're not, all the while telling themselves they're doing society a favour. Sometimes it's hard for me not to feel sorry for them, even as they press their foot harder on my neck. They're just doing what they have to, I tell myself. I can understand it, if not accept it. Some may find it wrong for me to empathize with the enemy like this... I feel it's un-human not to. Hate destroys... But that's not to say I'll stop resisting them.

I'll never stop. I'll just fight them with the truth, with love, and understanding. As much as I can.

In Struggle and Solidarity,
Steven Woods
Polunsky Death Camp



Anti-Torture News from DC

Dear Friends,

Here's the scoop on the court witness and nonviolent action yesterday conducted by Witness Against Torture and friends. Both the court witness, the march and action at the White House was yet another prayer of intercession for the victims of US torture and war making, another appeal for justice for the Guantanamo prisoners and hunger strikers, another nonviolent attempt to say NO TO TORTURE AND WAR! Below is a litany that was offered at the White House. The 14 arrested were charged with stationary demonstration in a restricted area and given a July 18 court date. We pray for the victims everywhere—from Iraq to Guantanamo to Virginia Tech. During this Easter-time let us recommit ourselves to practice resurrection and labour to create the beloved community. In deep gratitude to each of you for the loving sign of hope you are in our violent world!

Art Laffin,
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House, Wash. DC



Litany Offered During Nonviolent Witness at White House

That the US repent for engaging in criminal acts of torture and war,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For the release of 1800 Iraqi prisoners currently being held in US jails in Iraq
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For the eradication of the Military Commissions Act,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

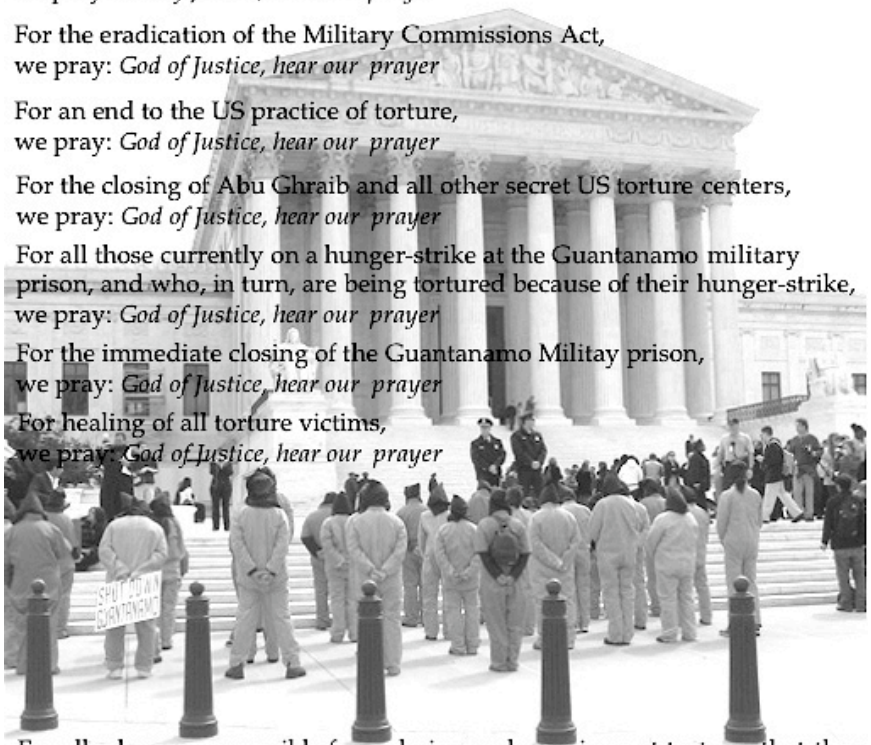
For an end to the US practice of torture,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For the closing of Abu Ghraib and all other secret US torture centers,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For all those currently on a hunger-strike at the Guantanamo military prison, and who, in turn, are being tortured because of their hunger-strike,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For the immediate closing of the Guantanamo Militay prison,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For healing of all torture victims,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*



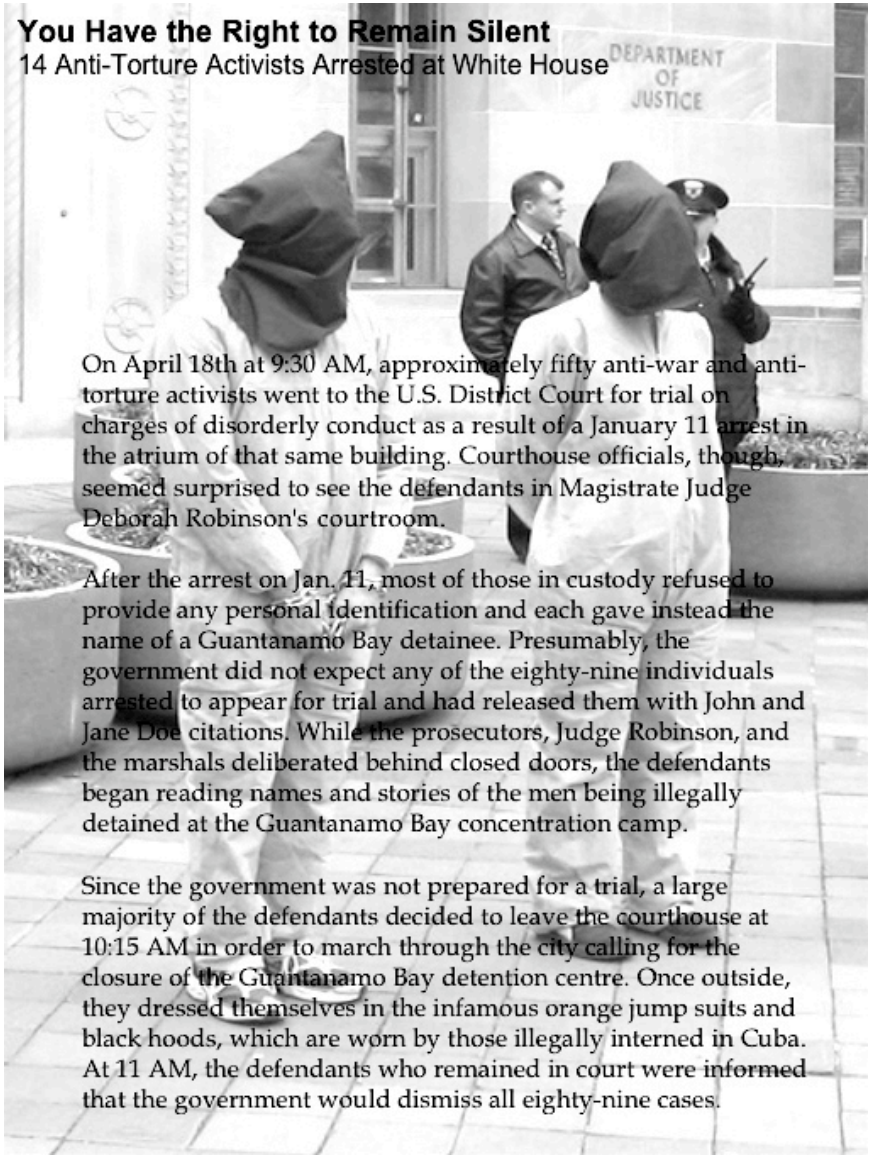
For all who are responsible for ordering and carrying out torture, that they repent for what they have done and make reparations to the victims,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For an end to the sin of torture,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

For an end to the sin of war,
we pray: *God of Justice, hear our prayer*

You Have the Right to Remain Silent

14 Anti-Torture Activists Arrested at White House



On April 18th at 9:30 AM, approximately fifty anti-war and anti-torture activists went to the U.S. District Court for trial on charges of disorderly conduct as a result of a January 11 arrest in the atrium of that same building. Courthouse officials, though, seemed surprised to see the defendants in Magistrate Judge Deborah Robinson's courtroom.

After the arrest on Jan. 11, most of those in custody refused to provide any personal identification and each gave instead the name of a Guantanamo Bay detainee. Presumably, the government did not expect any of the eighty-nine individuals arrested to appear for trial and had released them with John and Jane Doe citations. While the prosecutors, Judge Robinson, and the marshals deliberated behind closed doors, the defendants began reading names and stories of the men being illegally detained at the Guantanamo Bay concentration camp.

Since the government was not prepared for a trial, a large majority of the defendants decided to leave the courthouse at 10:15 AM in order to march through the city calling for the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre. Once outside, they dressed themselves in the infamous orange jump suits and black hoods, which are worn by those illegally interned in Cuba. At 11 AM, the defendants who remained in court were informed that the government would dismiss all eighty-nine cases.

The orange-clad anti-torture advocates marched to the Rayburn House Office Building, the Supreme Court, the Department of Justice and finally the White House. At each site, the advocates demanded justice and due process for all Guantanamo prisoners. At the White House, in order to emphasize the dire conditions faced by the detainees, fourteen of the demonstrators locked themselves to the White House fence on Pennsylvania Ave. After about an hour, the U.S. Park Police brought out bolt cutters, severing the locks and taking the resisters into custody.

During the demonstration at the White House, a large number of tourists and students on spring break witnessed the action. Coincidentally, representatives of Code Pink had come to the White House to chant antiwar slogans, as George W. Bush was scheduled to meet with Representative. Nancy Pelosi and Senator. Harry Reid to discuss supplemental funding of the war in Iraq. Cindy Sheehan and her sister Dede Miller joined with Code Pink to enthusiastically support the demonstrators demanding the closure of Guantanamo Bay.

After the prisoners were taken to the Park Police jail in Anacostia, those not arrested renewed their commitment to condemn the government's use of torture and its denial of due process rights to "enemy combatants." Non-violent civil resistance will continue and a number of anti-torture events are being planned and organized for the future. <



To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12: 48)

By Brother Elliot Nesch
April 9, 2007

Brother Elliot Nesch and Brother Raymond Schwab and his family are walking from Denver Co. to Washington DC in protest against the Evangelical Christian support for the war. For a more complete version of Brother Elliott's bible study as well as video updates of their walk free films and information on how to help with their witness and their ministry visit www.beitshalomministries.org

The Lord brings us to a greater glory and revelation when we trust in Him alone for our daily needs. This walk is not just about preaching the Gospel, calling the churches to repentance for their blind support of the wars in the Middle East, and 9/11 truth, but this walk is also about changing Brother Raymond, Sister Amelia and myself into Christ's image. In the end. it's all about Jesus. I feel accountable to share with you what God is doing in our hearts. To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12: 48).

Before we departed on the walk, Adam, a brother I recently met in his travels to Fort Collins, gave me a book by George Mueller. Truly the Holy Spirit inspired this because Mueller's faith has taught me to walk in a greater faith with the Lord Yeshua. Mueller was a poor man that began an orphanage by the power of prayer and waiting on, and waiting for God. He died a penniless man but he writes in his book about how the Lord provided his every need in sustaining several orphanages. He never told anybody his needs or asked anybody for anything yet never lacked.

We have decided to follow in Mueller's footsteps. We don't let our needs be known and we won't ask anybody for anything. . . except the Most High God. I anticipate chronicling the power of prayer on this trip as a testimony that God is living and powerful today.

This walk has been of God from the beginning from our movies coming together to God blessing us with an RV. On the walk, the RV's generator has busted and we've had problems with the engine but God took care of it by sending us

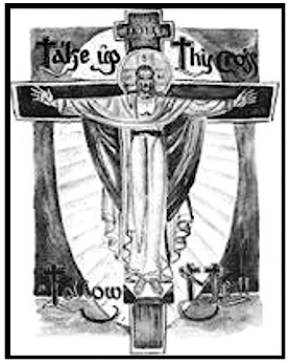
faithful brothers to meet our needs. God has provided our daily needs every single day. Manna for the day! So far, we've run out of money several times and hit rock bottom, but as we petition the Lord in prayer He faithfully provides without fail.

We've had knocks on the RV door at 1:00 am and open the door to find bags of groceries. Our signs blew out into the street and somebody saw them and came and blessed us with a $20 donation when we were in need. Just when we had to leave the RV park yesterday because we ran out of funds, somebody decided to pay for another night for us. Just after that, Domino's Pizza from across the street blessed us with two large pizzas. I have days of testimonies where the Lord takes notice of us. Truly, we run out of funds nearly every other day but God faithfully provides day by day in unique ways.

We have been discouraged at times for our lack but have learned to trust in Him completely. We've also been discouraged at hatred for the truth among professing Christians. One day as we were walking, Brother Raymond said that he wished God would come down and speak to us, to tell us what He's doing. I said, "He can," and we prayed for God to speak to us not knowing what to expect. Literally five minutes later, we approached a sign we could see from the distance that read, "TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART."

So, I have compiled this Bible study on prayer inspired by the promises of God and George Mueller's testimony. I have complete faith in assurance that God will provide for us all the way to DC. We will not let our needs be known. We will not ask for help. We are God's children following Him and He will provide for His name's sake! I trust in Him because I have His word. God cannot lie and He gives us several promises in the Scriptures.

Just as I posted this blog entry, I simultaneously received an e-mail from a brother in Colorado who gave us a donation (I felt like going back and adding this testimony). We've been praying for exactly $800 as of 2 days ago. Why? Because our other donations were sufficient for the day but we have bills for the RV, storage, cell phone and other needs for the ministry. We asked the Lord for $800 specifically to pay for these. As of last night, we had absolutely nothing as far as money; our food was sufficient but we had absolutely no money. As of today, we received $100 from a church, $200 from a man named Eric at a Passover dinner, and $560 from our brothers in Colorado. Praise Yeshua! Our needs are not known. We have not asked for anything and the Lord has given us $860 exactly, more than we prayed for, after a time having absolutely nothing. God is as powerful today as when he brought the Israelites out of Egypt and provided for them in the desert, as powerful today as when He was raised from the dead in the Man Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13).



I hope you can meditate on these passages and be blessed by God's word:

PRAYER BIBLE STUDY:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."
–Matthew 7: 7 - 9

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
–James 1: 5

Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of your righteous judgments
–Psalm 119: 64

PRAYERFULNESS:
Now it came to pass in those days that He went to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.
–Luke 6: 12

For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith.
–1 Thessalonians 3: 9, 10

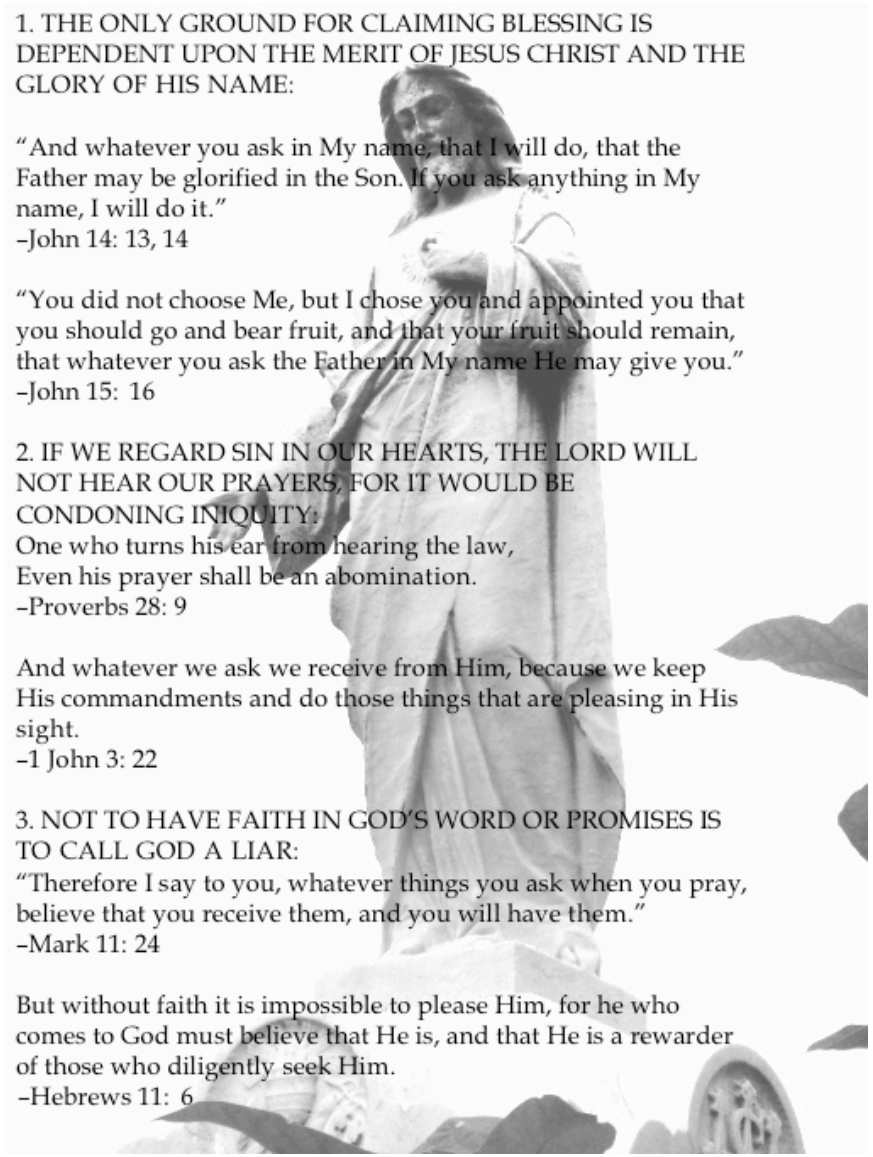
PRAYERLESSNESS:
"I will stretch out My hand against Judah,
And against the inhabitants of Jersalem. . .
Those who have turned back from following the Lord,
And have not sought the Lord, nor inquired of Him."
–Zephaniah 1: 4, 6

PRAY ALWAYS:
. . . praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-
–Ephesians 6: 18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
–1 Thessalonians 5: 16 - 18

POWER OF PRAYER:
So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and cast into the sea,' it will be done. And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."
–Matthew 21: 21, 22

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."
–John 15: 7



1. THE ONLY GROUND FOR CLAIMING BLESSING IS DEPENDENT UPON THE MERIT OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE GLORY OF HIS NAME:

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."
–John 14: 13, 14

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."
–John 15: 16

2. IF WE REGARD SIN IN OUR HEARTS, THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR OUR PRAYERS, FOR IT WOULD BE CONDONING INIQUITY:
One who turns his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer shall be an abomination.
–Proverbs 28: 9

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.
–1 John 3: 22

3. NOT TO HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S WORD OR PROMISES IS TO CALL GOD A LIAR:
"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."
–Mark 11: 24

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
–Hebrews 11: 6

And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.
–1 John 5: 15

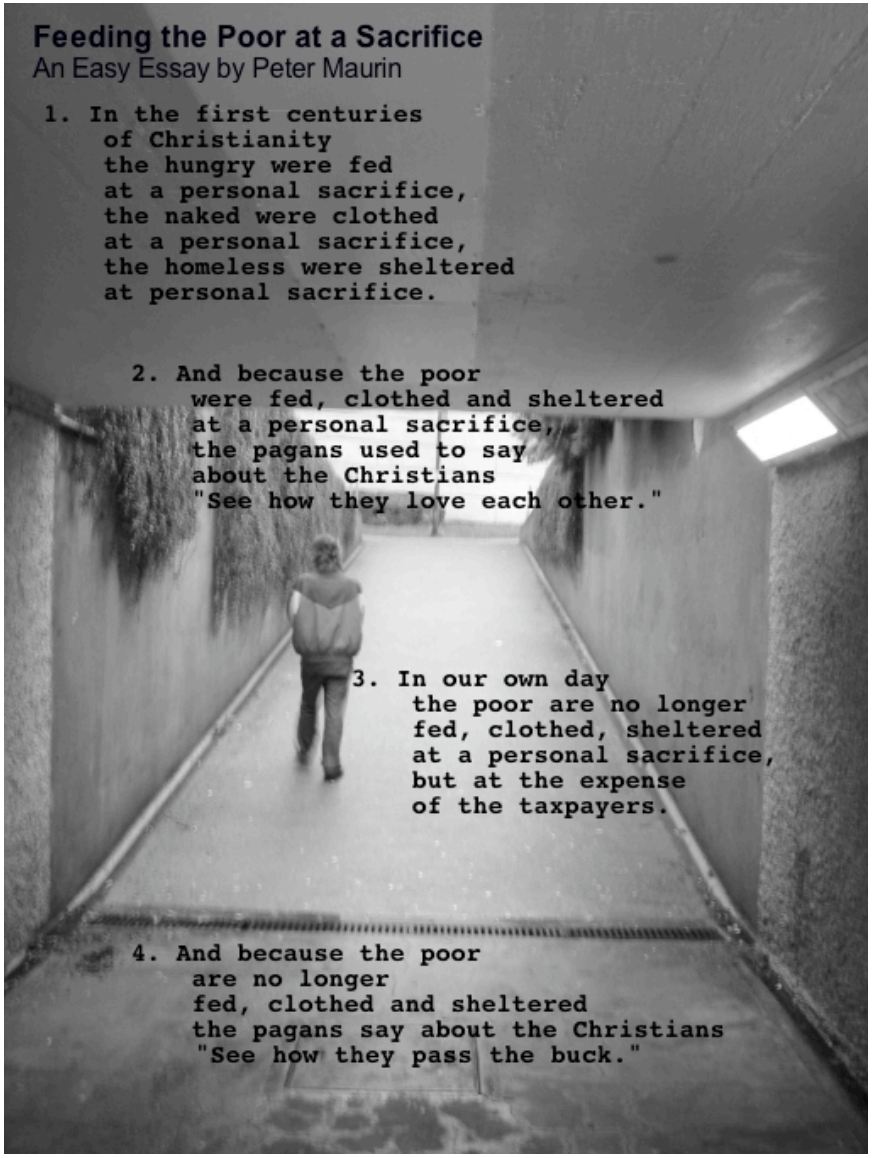
4. OUR PRAYERS MUST BE ASKED IN ACCORDANCE TO GOD'S WILL AND NOT OUR OWN LUSTS:
Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
–1 John 5: 14

You ask and do not receive, because you, you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.
–James 4: 3

"Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven."
–Matthew 6: 10

5. WE MUST HAVE PATIENCE TO WAIT ON GOD AND WAIT FOR GOD:
Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.
–James 5: 7





“We believe so we speak”
2nd Corinthians 4:13

Joy Ellison is a Catholic Worker and nonviolence trainer living in Portland, Oregon. She has spent a total of 5 and a half month in the West Bank, including three in Bethlehem. She plans to join Christian Peacemaker Teams in January 2007 as a full time member of the Palestine Team. She can be contacted at her blog http://inpalestine.blogspot.com

Art Laffin is a member of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in Washington, D.C. He also participated in the Witness Against Torture Catholic Worker delegation to Cuba in December 2005 to try and visit the Guantanamo prisoner. He is author of "Swords Into Plowshares."

Sarah Bjorknas is co-founder of Samaritan House (the Catholic Worker community in Vancouver BC Canada) She is also the Vancouver coordinator of the War Resisters Support Campaign.

Melissa Sillitoe lives in Portland Oregon. She is a member of St. Philip Neri Parish's Peace and Justice Commission and the Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good. She has recently published poems in SINE CERA, NETWORK, and THE WEST VIEW; her poetry also regularly appears in this zine.

Steven Woods is currently serving a death sentence at a state prison in Texas. He has a blog at www.anarchyinchains.com If you would like to write to Steven you can send mail to Steven Woods #999427 Polunsky Unit 3872 FM 350 S Livingston, TX 77351.

Brother Elliot Nesch is presently walking from Denver Colorado to Washington DC with Brother Raymond Schwab as a witness against the Evangelical Christian support for the Iraq war and to preach the gospel of peace in the name of Jesus Christ. Together Brother Raymond and Brother Elliot have made a number of documentary films, which are available for free or by donation from their website **www.beitshalomministries.com** please consider donating or showing your support for their protest by writing them and visiting their site.

Peter Maurin was co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement along with Dorothy Day. His thought has been seminal to the movement and though he never wrote a book of his own his philosophical poetry, dubbed Easy Essays has been compiled online and in print.

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Thank you again for reading.
Chris Rooney, and Karl Germyn
Editors, The Christian Radical